

WABASH RIVER HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes – November 14, 2007

Indianapolis, Indiana Government Center South, Conference Rooms 1 & 2

Voting Members Present:

Adams County – John Friedt
Allen County – Ron Zartman
Carroll County – George Mears
Cass County – Mercedes Brugh
DNR – Steve Morris
Huntington County – Mike Mettler
Knox County – Shane Cooper
Miami County – Ken Einselen
Posey County – Ralph Weinzapfel
Sullivan County – John Gettinger
Tippecanoe County – Norman (Lucky) Neiburger
Vigo County – Keith Ruble (alternate)
Warren County – Louise Jewell

Proxies:

N. Sherrell Marginet to M. Weinzapfel
Ernest Passwater to John Gettinger
Keith Huffman to Mike Mettler

Voting Members Absent w/o Proxy:

Jay County
Parke County
Vermillion County

Non-Voting Members Not Present:

IDEM

Non-Voting Members Present:

DNR Historic Preservation & Archaeology – Dr. James Glass
Indiana Office of Tourism – Jaime Fry
INDOT – Ray Irvin

Guests:

Senator Robert Deig
Stanton Lambert – Wabash River
Enhancement Corporation

Commission and DNR Staff Present:

Ron James – WRHCC Executive Director
Amber Caddell – DNR Admin Pool

CALL TO ORDER

John Gettinger called the meeting to order at 1 PM. John asked everyone to introduce themselves and the county or organization they represented. Proxies were reported. Ralph Weinzapfel introduced State Senator (49th District) Robert Deig who briefly addressed the commission.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 12TH MEETING MINUTES

John G. asked for approval of the meeting minutes from Sept. 12, 2007. Lucky Neiburger made a motion to approve the minutes; Keith Ruble 2nd. The minutes were approved as written.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (see attached)

John G. distributed a report of his corridor activities since the September meeting. John reported that 300 students and 60 adults participated in the educational rafting trips on the Wabash River in early October. The rafting trip has been well supported by the community and has a positive cash flow. John also reported that a significant contribution to the Merom Community Foundation has lead to the purchase of land along the Wabash River in Sullivan County with plans for a one mile trail.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT (see attached)

Ron James referred to some highlights of his report that was sent out with the meeting agenda. Ron pointed out that the water trail opening is about 50% complete. Ron also noted that the opening of an Allen County outfitter along the Wabash River is indicative of the economic development that can occur when opportunities to experience the river are developed and marketed. Ron also reported having heard strong arguments for the economic impacts of parks and greenways from Dr. John Crompton at the "Greening the Region" Symposium held in W. Lafayette.

FINANCE REPORT (see attached)

Steve Morris distributed copies of the latest commission financial report. Keith R. moved to accept the financial report and Ken Einselen seconded the motion. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Education

John G. reported further on the Sullivan County 8th grade rafting trip. Subjects taught, among others, include plant/bird identification, water quality testing, global positioning systems (GPS), watersheds, and historical use. John reported that a survey of 8th grade rafting participants, four years after their experience on the river, reflect that 80% of the kids were more inclined to support river protection efforts. Discussion ensued about cost of rafts, logistics, and liability insurance.

River Community Signs and River Road Signs

Ron J. and Dale Brier, DNR, finalized the Community and River Road signs. The signs have not been delivered yet. Commission members were reminded to identify river road routes in their county by consulting their highway departments and Chambers of Commerce. Louise Jewell moved that the Commission purchase 100 more River Road signs. Mercedes Brugh 2d. Motion carried.

Ray Irvin stated that a resolution would be necessary to request that INDOT place road signs at river crossings. Keith R. moved the Commission create a "Wabash River Heritage Corridor" sign. George Mears seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Water Trail

Steve M. and Ron J. responded to PEN Products' request; informed PEN as to hole placement in the water trail bridge signs. The signs have not been received as yet.

Banks of the Wabash, Inc. (BOW)

Ken E. reported that Banks of the Wabash (BOW) contributed to a new Wabash River website. The website address is www.wabashriver.us. Ken also announced that BOW is seeking nominations for their Wabash River awards program.

Legislative

Commission members discussed a Resolution that would request the "Corridor Fund" receive the royalties from oil, gas, and minerals extracted from beneath Indiana's navigable waterways. The Commission agreed the resolution should reflect that the request covered royalties from all navigable waterways. Louise J. moved to adopt the resolution as revised and Mercedes B. 2nd. Motion carried.

Discussion then centered upon text for legislation that was sent with the meeting agenda. Concerns were expressed that the draft legislation would deposit the funds in the "Commission Fund" that is

currently treated as a reverting fund. It was agreed that legislation should create a “Corridor Fund” with stronger non-reverting language. Further discussion focused on potential authors and sponsors for a Bill. Members were asked to contact their legislators and determine their willingness to sponsor.

Cultural – no report

Video II project

Ken E. reported he had obtained a county historians list. Ken is still collecting ideas for 3 minute video clips from each county. Ken mentioned the idea of possibly looking for a common “hidden history” thread. Keith R. suggested making the current video available to the county historians and ask them to suggest ideas for the next video. Shane Cooper suggested a “river roads” theme.

OLD BUSINESS

River Alliance & Rally committee

The next National Rivers Rally will be held May 2-5 in Ohio. The current commission policy is to send the executive director and one other commission member. It was agreed to discuss this further at the January commission meeting.

Mid-America Trails & Greenway Conference

Steve M. reported the Commission has two registration admissions available through sponsorship of the Mid America Trails & Greenways Conference. John G. and Ron Zartman expressed interest in attending the conference being held December 9-12, 2007 in Chicago.

Projects for Corridor - 2016

Ron J. has received abstracts of potential corridor projects waiting funding by the Corridor Fund. If funded soon, most could be ready for Indiana’s bicentennial in 2016. Counties submitting projects so far included Adams, Allen, Carroll, Posey, Tippecanoe, Vigo and Warren.

Commissioner appointments

Steve Morris announced that letters from DNR Director Rob Carter were going out this week to request county commissioners appoint representatives to the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission for 2008-2009.

Lafayette office share with Wabash Riverkeeper

Ron James reported that Dr. Rae Schnapp, the Wabash Riverkeeper, was now sharing the Commission’s Lafayette office and was there a few days per week. A telephone line has been installed.

***L’Esprit de Ouabache* 08-09 edition**

Ron James asked for newsletter articles to be submitted by the end of December.

NEW BUSINESS

Nominating Committee

John G. appointed Ralph W., Ron Z. and Lucky N. to be the nominating committee for 2008 officers.

Commission Planning Retreat

Ron J. reported Turkey Run Inn has offered a “two for one” overnight rate on their rooms to entice the Commission to hold their retreat in the facility in conjunction with the March 12 meeting. Ralph W. moved to hold a Commission retreat March 11 to 13, and the March 12 meeting, at Turkey Run S.P. Ken E. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Reflections e-newsletter

Ron James asked that e-news articles be submitted by the end of November.

Meeting schedule and locations for 2008

2008 meetings tentatively as follows:

March - Turkey Run State Park in Parke County

May – New Harmony in Posey County

July – Carroll County, Montezuma in Parke County, or Limberlost in Adams County

September – Merom in Sullivan County

November – Logansport in Cass County

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ralph W. announced a watershed study of Big Creek in Vanderburgh and Gibson Counties

Ron Z. announced a study taking place on the Little Wabash River. Ron also announced the Sol Fest taking place May 3-4, 2008, at Fox Island Park in Allen County.

Stanton Lambert announced that a Purdue University group in Tippecanoe County had applied for Section 319 funds from IDEM for a water quality improvement study.

John G. mentioned an IDEM 319 grant project on Busseron Creek in Sullivan County.

Ron J. reported the Tippecanoe County League of Women Voters platform includes support for the principles of our mission and vision for the Wabash River.

Keith R. announced a possible 800 acre land acquisition project taking place along the Wabash River in Vigo County that involves funding from various agencies, organizations and businesses.

Ron J. announced the NiSource Environmental Challenge Grant deadline of February 28th, 2008.

John G. mentioned one of the ideas for PaddleFest, that he is exploring with Ralph W. and Sherrell Marginet, includes a river journey that covers the entire Wabash River, possibly as a relay event.

Meeting adjourned at 4: 30 PM

Next meeting is January 9, 2008, 1 p.m., Conference Rooms 1 & 2, at the Indiana Government Center, 402 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana.